

F-Cable, George  
CASTRO, Fidel  
CIA 4.01 ASSASSINATION

ORIG. MAFIA

TRAFFICANTE, SANTO JR.  
CIA 104 Breckenridge,  
Scott  
✓ Lynch, Grayston  
(orig under Cile)

# The CIA The Mafia, A

IF ANY ODD TRIBUTES have been offered to the American character, but few can rival that of Sen. Walter Mondale upon reviewing the total failure of the CIA's persistent efforts to kill Fidel Castro. "Thank God," he said, "we're just not very good at that sort of thing."

Most thoughtful observers seemed to draw the same reassuring conclusion. Even the American Mafia dons who had been recruited by the Agency to carry out Castro's execution were seen as too incompetent to be really evil. The portrait drawn by the Senate Intelligence Committee casts them more in the light of characters out of "The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight," bumbling after Castro but apparently never getting around to making an attempt on his life.

Such interpretations of these deadly undertakings are no doubt comforting, but they are unlikely to be more than exercises in wishful thinking. To begin with, Sen. Robert Morgan (D-N.C.) tells us "the theory that prevailed in the [Senate Intelligence] Committee was that the Mafia never tried to kill Castro, that we were being used."

The committee did not pursue this, but an independent examination of the available record of one of the key Mafia figures involved in the plot makes us consider the troubling possibility that at least some of the CIA's Mafia associates were working with Castro.

Such a combination would hardly have seemed likely in 1960 when the CIA set out to recruit the Mafia. Almost all the major underworld families had invested heavily in Cuba and Castro was fast moving to seize their holdings. He had even put some of their members in jail. The Mafia's willingness to do the CIA's dirty work would not then have required explanation.

Sam Giancana and John Roselli are the two mobsters generally identified with the Mafia-CIA plot. But a third, Santo Trafficante Jr., was perhaps the most important of the three, for it was his men, both in Miami and Havana, who were supposed to carry out the murder.

Trafficante is generally identified as the don of southern Florida, but he is also one of the chiefs in the Mafia's loose national confederation. Once the Agency decided to turn to the mob, it was inevitable that Trafficante's assistance would be sought. Alone among the principal dons, he had lived in Cuba. He had built a large organization there and still had a number of associates in Castro's Havana. Moreover, his professional experience made him ideally suited for assassination work.

He had learned the business from his father, Santo Trafficante Sr., who came from Sicily in 1901 to Tampa, where he built and ran his crime family for the next 50 years. In 1951, a year after surviving a shotgun attempt on his life, Santo Jr. succeeded his father.

In the first few years of his rule, Tampa was plagued with gangland murder. He was himself a leading suspect in the 1957 barbershop execution of Albert Anastasia, the old chief of Murder Incorporated. Accompanied by a Cuban associate, Trafficante was in New York City the night before the killing.

According to reports of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Anastasia's move in on Trafficante's

The following month, Mafia national convention later, his eminence was in attendance at the La Stella Restaurant in Los Angeles, Carlo Gambino's country's leading dons.

He was, in short, one of the most powerful men in the United States and, significantly, the one most affected by Castro's revolution. Not only were his gambling casinos seized but he had been jailed in Cuba. One would assume that such a man might have contemplated taking on Castro independently. At that time, in 1960, Castro's grip on Cuba was by no means secure. Once Trafficante accepted his CIA commission, Castro's days should have been numbered.

## A Question of Loyalties

THE INITIAL PLOT called for poisoning Castro in his favorite Havana restaurant, where one of Trafficante's men worked. The CIA's Technical Services Division supplied deadly botulinum toxin which Robert Maheu, who was coordinating the mob's efforts for the CIA, passed to an exile associated with Trafficante at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach. From there Trafficante's courier was to deliver the poison pills to the man in the Havana restaurant.

All of this took place in March and April of 1961, just before the Bay of Pigs. Accounts vary as to why the plan failed. One version is that the authorization to administer the poison never came through; another, that Castro stopped going to the restaurant.

The most intriguing theory was proposed by the CIA's deputy inspector general, Scott Breckenridge, to a Senate staff member. Breckenridge, who had been responsible for investigating the CIA-Mafia plot, maintained that Trafficante had been providing Castro with details of the plot all along.

But why would Santo Trafficante, of all people, do this? One possible explanation is proposed in a July 21, 1961, report on Trafficante by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics: "There are unconfirmed rumors in the Cuban refugee population in Miami that, when Fidel Castro ran the American racketeers out of Cuba and seized the casinos, he kept Santo Trafficante Jr. in jail to make it appear that he had a personal dislike for Trafficante, when in fact Trafficante is an agent of Castro. Trafficante is allegedly Castro's outlet for illegal contraband in the country."